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(420) NIGHT LEAD DENGLE (PRECEDENT BONN AND SAN DIEGO DAY)

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WASHINGTON, JULY 29 (AP)—THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT WOULD MAKE NO OFFICIAL COMMENT TODAY ON A CLAIM BY THE SOVIET NEWSPAPER PRAVDA THAT WEST GERMAN MERCENARIES ARE SUPPORTING THE U.S. WAR EFFORT IN VIET NAM.

NOR WOULD THE DEPARTMENT HAVE ANY OFFICIAL COMMENT ON PRAVDA'S REPORT THAT DIETER DENGLE, A U.S. NAVY PILOT WHO ESCAPED FROM THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, CARRIED A WEST GERMAN PASSPORT.

THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAS IDENTIFIED THE 28-YEAR-OLD GERMAN-BORN DENGLE AS A SERVICEMAN WHO WAS IN THE U.S. AIR FORCE JUNE 1957-APRIL 1963, THEN WAS COMMISSIONED AS A NAVY FLIER IN 1964. HE CAME TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1957 WITH A BROTHER, MARTIN, WHO LIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO.

PRAVDA ASSERTED DENGLE IS AN OFFICER IN THE WEST GERMAN FORCES, ALTHOUGH HE WORE AN AMERICAN UNIFORM AND CARRIED A U.S. ARMED FORCES IDENTITY CARD WHEN CAPTURED.

THE PRAVDA STORY SAID ALSO DENGLE HAD A WEST GERMAN PASSPORT ISSUED IN 1956 AND RENEWED BY THE MAYOR OF STUTTGART AUG. 24, 1964, TO RUN UNTIL JAN. 1, 1969.

ALTHOUGH THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT HAD NO OFFICIAL COMMENT ON THE PRAVDA STORY, A SPOKESMAN REITERATED THAT:

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--DENGLE WAS NATURALIZED A U.S. CITIZEN AUG. 3, 1960 AT SAN ANTONIO, TEX.

--AS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN HE COULD NOT BE A CITIZEN OF GERMANY AND THEREFORE COULD NOT HOLD A LEGAL GERMAN PASSPORT.

--IF FOR SOME REASON OR BY SOME CIRCUMSTANCES DENGLE CARRIED AN OLD GERMAN PASSPORT IT WOULD BE AGAINST MILITARY REGULATIONS WHICH REQUIRE A MILITARY MAN TO CARRY ONLY AN IDENTIFICATION CARD IN COMBAT.

THE WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT REJECTED SOVIET CHARGES THAT IT HAS MILITARY MEN FIGHTING IN VIET NAM.

GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN KARL GUENTHER VON HASE SAID AT BONN THERE ARE ONLY FOUR WEST GERMAN ARMED FORCES MEN IN SOUTH VIET NAM: THE MILITARY ATTACHE AT THE GERMAN EMBASSY IN SAIGON, HIS DEPUTY AND TWO NONCOM AIDES. ALL THE OTHER 129 GERMANS IN VIET NAM, VON HASE SAID, ARE ASSOCIATED WITH CIVILIAN RELIEF AID PROJECTS.

PASSPORTS IN GERMANY ARE ISSUED BY LOCAL POLICE AUTHORITIES AND NOT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. IN STUTTGART, WHERE PRAVDA CLAIMS DENGLE'S PASSPORT WAS RENEWED, POLICE HEADQUARTERS SAID AN EXTENSIVE SEARCH OF ITS FILES SHOWED ITS PASSPORT SECTION HAD NEITHER ISSUED NOR RENEWED A PASSPORT FOR ANYONE UNDER THE NAME OF DIETER DENGLE.

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DENGLE MEANWHILE IS BEING TREATED AT BALBOA NAVAL HOSPITAL, SAN DIEGO, CALIF. THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SAID THERE THAT THE FLIER IS BEING TREATED FOR "MEDICAL PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM HIS IMPRISONMENT BY THE COMMUNISTS" AND HIS ESCAPE. HIS GENERAL CONDITION WAS DESCRIBED AS GOOD.

THE OFFICIAL EAST GERMAN NEWS AGENCY ADN REPORTED TONIGHT UNDER SAIGON AND WASHINGTON DATES LINES THAT THE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY HAS FORBIDDEN DENGLE TO MAKE ANY STATEMENTS ABOUT HIS PART IN "THE CRIMINAL WAR OF THE U.S.A. AGAINST VIET NAM AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA."

ADN SAID THAT DENGLE HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN BY PATHET LAO FORCES "DURING AN AMERICAN TERROR ATTACK OVER LAOS."

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